DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 367 920 CG 025 262

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TITLE Restructuring: School Counselors Can Make a Difference.
PUB DATE 22 Feb 94
NOTE 13p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Counselor Role; *Educational Change; Elementary School Students; Elementary Secondary Education; Intervention; Prevention; *School Counselors; *School Restructuring; Secondary School Students; *Student Problems

ABSTRACT

Although there have been technological and structural advances in the schools within the past 10 years, the social environment for young people has severely deteriorated. Teenage pregnancy, guns in schools, illegal drugs, homelessness, suicide, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, and unemployment are some of the negative mental and physical conditions that plague today's students. Consequently, more recent restructuring models have proposed the creation of a learning environment which emphasizes both cognitive and affective development. The opportunity for active involvement by school counselors in the current restructuring endeavor is obvious. Counselors, with their unique training in communication skills, problem solving, team and group facilitation, consultation, and coordination, are in positions to play key roles in the current reformation taking place in the schools. It is imperative, however, that counselors thoroughly understand the movement if they are to actively participate. This article clearly defines the restructuring movement and specifically outlines a proposed role for school counselors. Restructuring is defined and major premises of restructuring are reviewed, as are a number of components of restructuring. The counselor's role during the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of restructuring is described as two-fold: counselors are in a position to manage and coordinate the restructuring movement within the school and to restructure the guidance and counseling program so that it is an integral part of the school system. Finally, special considerations and alternate delivery models are discussed. (NB)

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ED 367 920

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RESTRUCTURING: SCHOOL COUSELORS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

February 22, 1994

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Introduction

For the past decade, American Society has exhibited grave concern over the apparent erosion of the current educational system. Numerous reports alarm citizens of escalating school dropout rates, rising illiteracy, the steady decline in performance on standardized tests, and the graduation of students who are unprepared for the workforce (Moore, 1988; National Center for Educational Statistics, 1988; Rumberger, 1987). In addition, a large number of youth come to school with serious personal and social problems. The Office of Educational Research and Improvement (averages cited in Sears, 1993) reported that each day, the following occur:

2,795 teenagers become pregnant.

211 children are arrested for drug abuse.

437 teens are arrested for drunken driving.

10 children die from gunshot wounds.

six youth commit suicide.

Moreover, the source of these problems appears to be complicated and deep-rooted. Reed and Sauter (1990) stated that today's students are faced with complex problems which often have an adverse effect on the learning process. These included extreme poverty, malnutrition, homelessness, a limited command of the English language, and the neglect or absence of one or more of the biological parents.

Manuele (1992) proposed that the traditional support structures of the past have diminished as a result of the breakdown of the family unit along with a more mobile, permissive society. High divorce rates, single parent homes, abusive parents, lack of parent involvement, and poverty were correlated with the high incidence of depression, drug and alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suicide, discipline problems, truancy, and dropping out which characterize many of today's students.

A Nation At Risk (1983), published by The National Commission on Excellence in Education, stated that the primary concern of the schools should be intellectual achievement, and that the educational system compromises its commitment to excellence when it attempts to find solutions to social and personal problems which should be addressed by the home and other social institutions. As a result, reformation advocated in a "pursuit for academic excellence" included such measures as the extended school day or year, increased homework, more rigorous graduation requirements, the reformation of the teaching profession, and school based management.

However, ten years after the original commission report, former Education Secretary Terrel Bell (1993) conceded that, although there have been technological and structural advances, the social environment for young people has severely deteriorated. Teenage pregnancy, guns in schools, illegal drugs, homelessness, suicide, AIDS, and unemployment were cited as negative mental and physical conditions which plague today's students. Therefore, more recent restructuring models proposed the creation of a learning environment which emphasized both cognitive and affective

development (Parker, 1989; Strange, 1992; Manuele, 1992; Kochan and Herrington, 1992; Gregory and Smith, 1987; Hawks, 1992).

The opportunity for active involvement by school counselors in the current restructuring endeavor is obvious. Rosalie Humphrey (1993), American School Counselor Association President, in reference to school counselors' role in this movement, stated, "The experts in school leadership, school counselors, must realize their power and seize empowerment, taking hold of the movement" (p. 2). Counselors, with their unique training in communication skills, problem solving, team and group facilitation, consultation, and coordination, are in positions to play key roles in the current reformation taking place within our schools. The purpose of this article is to clearly define the restructuring movement and to specifically outline a proposed role for school counselors.

A Definition of Restructurting

Strange (1992) defined restructuring as "substantial systemic changes in the way students learn and teachers teach" (p. 106). The restructured school functions as a learning community in which curriculum and school programs center around the individual needs of the student.

Gregory and Smith (1987) pointed out that restructuring is not only changing the organization and structure of the school, but it is also altering the culture. In other words, restructuring involves examining and questioning values and norms which define the very essence of schooling. They suggested that all previous attempts to change schools have been technical or managerial. Examples of this included individual learning packets, open classrooms, and learning centers of the sixties and seventies, and site based management of the eighties. These changes have been short lived because changing the culture has been ignored.

Major Premises of Restructuring

The literature germain to this study revealed several premises which appeared to be present in a number of restructuring proposals. It is imperative that counselors thoroughly understand the movement if they are to actively partici[illegible]. Because each premise is a compilation of information presented by various authors, discussi[illegible] individual viewpoints was not feasible. Although this list is by no means exhaustive, it is certainly representative.

Active Engagement in Learning

Students are actively engaged in meaningful learning activities. Learning experiences are designed so that students are apprentices rather than spectators. Learning is goal oriented and connected to the real world (Hawks, 1992; Glasser, 1992; Parker, 1989; Gregory and Smith, 1987; Knovetz, 1992).

Individual Student Needs Addressed

Differences in rate, style, capacity, and interest are the focus of all instruction. The diverse

populations of contemporary classrooms require flexible instructional arrangements and strategies (Strange, 1992; Knapp and Shield, 1990; and Glickman, 1992, Conrath, 1993; Blatchford, 1993).

Learning is Both Cooperative and Individual

Learning is both an individual and a cooperative venture, where students work at their own pace and performance level, and also have the opportunity to work with other students. Hence, they develop self-identity and pride, while maintaining a sense of belonging, community, and responsibility to the group (Glickman, 1992; Strange, 1992; and Parker, 1989; Conrath, 1993).

Clearly Outlined Expectations and Assessment Techniques

Expectations for quality work and methods of assessment are clearly defined. Assessment is used as a tool to develop further teaching and learning experiences. Continuous feedback to students and parents is used to encourage and train students in self-evaluation (Glickman, 1992; Knovetz, 1992; Conrath, 1993).

Staff Empowerment

School personnel is empowered to create and model active learning. Administrators, teachers, and support staff are involved in shared decision making in which all parties are responsible for the school's success (Knovetz, 1992 ; Glasser, 1992; Sellars, 1993).

Total Community Involvement

There is total community involvement in the educational process. Community members are directly involved in setting standards for quality work. They actively support learning both in and out of school (Drolet, 1992; McDowell and Sager, 1992; Krovetz, 1992).

Relationship Between School Success and Social Emotional Health

Schools are cognizant of the relationship between school success and social and emotional health. They actively reach out to strengthen families. Kochan and Herrington (1992) define this as an "interrelated system of educatonal and social support" (Kochan and Herrington, 1992; Glasser, 1992; Knapp and Shield, 1990; Manuele, 1992; Hawks, 1992; McDowell and Sager, 1992).

Components of Restructuring

In order to fulfill the premises of restructuring which were outlined previously, there must be a change in how schooling is viewed. As discussed earlier, there must be a change in the culture or the way things are done in the school. Some components of the change which were emphasized in the literature include, but are not limited to, the following:

Flexible Scheduling, Extended School Hours

This allows students to pursue unique interests at individualized paces. In addition, after school recreation and socialization is provided for students with working parents. Furthermore, the community may utilize the school for various functions (Parker, 1989).

Balance of Skill Development and Application

Basic skill development remains a focal point of education. Students learn to utilize acquired skills in practical application (Parker, 1989; Knovetz, 1992).

The Student Project as the Core of the School Day

These exhibitions are devised by students to demonstrate mastery of educational skills and concepts and integrate knowledge from several desciplines. Projects are compiled into portfolios which are evaluated by an assigned advisory committee (Sizer cited in Strange, 1992; Parker, 1989).

Integrated and Interdisciplinary Instruction

Collaborative, cooperative learning and teaching encompassing several disciplines is advocated as an alternative to fragmented, academically departmentalized curriculum (Hawks, 1992; Blatchford, 1993; Knovetz, 1992; Conrath, 1993; Glasser, 1992; Parker, 1989).

Smaller Schools, Breaking Larger Schools into Families or Houses

A school of 2,000 students might be divided into several families of 300 to 400 students and 15 to 20 professional staff to foster communities of parents, students, and staff with shared aspirations (Gregory and Smith, 1987).

The School as the Center for the Delivery of Social Services

The elimination of service duplication, increased efficiency, and cost reduction are the theoretical effects of this component. Students would be more likely to receive services that address the needs of the whole child using a systematic approach (Hollifield, 1992; Kochan and Herrington, 1992).

School Based Management

Parents, teachers, administrators, and community members work together to plan and implement school curriculum and programs. Local autonomy and decentralized decision making are at the root of school based management (Sellars, 1993; Hollifield, 1992; Drolet, 1992; Krovetz, 1992; McDowell and Sager, 1992).

The Role of the School Counselor

Restructuring, as it is defined in this article, must take place in a systematic manner. A planning stage, an implementation stage, and an evaluative stage is needed to proceed with each desired component of the process. The role of school counselors will be discussed within the constraints of each of these stages.

In addition, the American School Counselor Association (1990) identified three processes used by counselors as counseling, consulting, and coordinating. Reference will be made to these processes throughout the role definition.

Finally, it is not within the scope of this article to address specific interventions, services, and activities in detail. However, a section is devoted to special considerations and alternate delivery

models which may be advantageous in providing optimal services to the clientele within the parameters of the restructuring movement.

Planning Stage of Restructuring

As previously discussed, the very essence of restructuring is change and reform not of a superficial nature, but of a deeper order which involves both structure and culture. Often, revolutionary movements such as this are accompanied by resistance, confusion, fear, uncertainty, passivity, and avoidance. The journey seems too long and the road too steep. Special guidance, coordination, and encouragement is needed to motivate the participants.

School counselors have expertise in the management of human relations, organizational skills, and problem solving. They are schooled in the personal and group dynamics necessary to transform the rules, roles, and relationships that restructuring calls for (Strange, 1992). Furthermore, unlike other helping professionals in the community, school counselors have been trained in counseling theory as it specifically relates to the school setting. They have the ability to coordinate, guide, facilitate, and empower this reformation of our educational system.

As committees are formed to plan any element of restructuring within a given school, counselors should take an active role in a number of activities. These may include coordinating meetings, generating solutions to problems, teaching coping skills, searching for resources, and managing human relations through the facilitation of trust building, open communication, and active listening.

In addition, school counselors must be advocates and leaders in planning the restructuring components which directly involve affective education and counseling services. It is vital that counselors champion the cause of proactive guidance and counseling which is necessary to meet the needs of today's diverse population.

Counselors must provide data and evidence supporting the positive relationship between school success and the social and emotional health of the student. Then they must assess the needs of the school community. Lastly, they must develop a comprehensive guidance and counseling program which includes preventative as well as remedial components designed to support and strengthen both the individual and the family unit. This comprehensive program must be designed to meet the personal, social, educational, and career needs of the individual student.

Gysbers and Henderson (1988) described the ideal counseling program as "both an integral part of and an independent component of the total educational program" (p. 72).. In describing an innovative school counseling model entitled "Preventive Systemic School Counseling Model (PSSCM)", McDowell and Sayger (1992) placed school counselors in the center of the school system. School personnel, parents, community members, and students are identified as the four subsystems which school counselors empower to develop and implement more affective education.

A diagram of this proposed model, including services which the counselor may provide, is included in the appendix.

In the development of affective based education, counselors must serve as the consultants, assisting in curricular and program development. They can also assist in the training and education of personnel when necessary.

Implementation Stage

As the individual components of restructuring are implemented, counselors will continue to coordinate and manage the various committees that are now piloting their proposed plan. At this time of transition, counselors will be instrumental in facilitating stress management and problem resolution. They can also diffuse resistance through the encouragement of active listening and open communication.

Counselors will also take a leading role in ensuring that new educational programs directly related to guidance and counseling are being delivered in a responsible and ethical fashion. It should be noted that teachers, community members, and paraprofessionals can and must take an active role in providing affective education and career development options for students. However, school counselors, with specialized training and expertise in these areas, must function as the catalysts, consultants, and coordinators of these services. Counselors must ensure that all personnel is appropriately trained and supervised in performing the duties which are assigned.

Evaluation Stage

Evaluation is an ongoing process which should occur as restructuring components are implemented and in place for a period of time. Feedback can be of a formal or informal nature, and should be generated from all parties who are directly impacted by the program. Examples of various forms of feedback include observations of programs in action, questionnaires, surveys, and assessment of student performance. Evaluation and revision are vital if programs related to restructuring are to survive and flourish. Again, counselors can use their expertise in organization and management to assist school personnel in using the feedback to change and perfect program components as needed.

Also, counselors should generate and use feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of the various services which they provide. Accountability is imperative to survival.

Summary of Counselor's Role in the Three Stages

In summary, the counselors' role in each of the three stages of the restructuring process is two-fold. First of all, counselors are in a position to manage and coordinate the restructuring movement within each school. Secondly, counselors have the opportunity to restructure the guidance and counseling program so that it is an integral part of the school system, and so that it is instrumental in fostering success, productivity, and positive mental health for all students.

Special Considerations and Alternate Delivery Models

Several premises of the restructuring movement have direct implications for school counselors. These include:

1. the school's commitment to actively reach out to strengthen families.
2. the encouragement of total community involvement and collaboration.
3. the acknowledgement of the relationship between school success and the social and emotional health of the student.

Counselors must convince the public that they are highly qualified to strengthen the family system. Proactive programs specifically oriented to family needs must be developed. Some of the strategies used by model schools include:

1. the development of a parent center, a special place set aside in the school for parents to meet and work (Hollifield, 1992).
2. family support programs such as home visits, parent education, day care, and recreational activities available before and after school (Strange, 1992) and (Hollifield, 1992).

Secondly, counselors must modify their schedule so that they are available for family counseling at times that are convenient for parents. Greer and Richardson (1992) suggested that counselors might consider working a flexible schedule to accommodate the needs of parents who work during the day.

To facilitate community involvement, counselors can act as a liaison between the school and community using local businesses to assist in the school's career development program. By developing effective ties into the community, counselors can function as a main referral source to outside resources, thus connecting students with career education experiences (McDowell and Sayger, 1992).

It is significant that a number of articles acknowledge the relationship between school success and social and emotional health as a central theme in restructuring. In this time of budget

cutbacks, counseling programs are often a primary target. Counselors need to publicize the vital role affective education and counseling services play in promoting social and emotional health.

A final consideration in analyzing the role of counselors is the management of the diverse and fragmented tasks which are required of school counselors. It is apparent that the magnitude of the role defined in this paper would overwhelm most school counselors. Specialization is a viable solution to this problem. The following is an illustration of specialization in a school which employs four fulltime counselors.

1. Counselor A would concentrate on academic counseling and the coordination of the restructuring committees.
2. Counselor B would focus on career counseling and community laison work.
3. Counselor C would specialize in affective education, peer facilitation, and small group counseling.
4. Counselor D would manage crisis intervention, personal counseling, and family counseling.

Conclusion

As a result of the restructuring movement, schools have a need for individuals who have specialized training in the management of human relations, and coordination and organizational skills. Also, the restructuring movement recognizes the relationship between school success and the social and emotional health of the student. It advocates affective educational programs and the strengthening of the family.

School counselors must affirm their role as experts in both the management of human relations and in counseling theory and application as it specifically relates to the school setting. They must claim their rightful position as integral and indispensible members of the educational team. The restructuring movement provides this opportunity. Counselor must sieze the moment!

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APPENDIX

Preventive Systemic School Counseling Model
(McDowell and Sayger, 1992)

School Personnel

A

Parents B School Counselor C Community

D

Students

Intervention/ Prevention that may be used to enhance each segment of the system.
A= School Personnel, B= Parents, C= Community, D= Students.

A. Consultation, training, inservice, workshops, team building, referral, seminars, curriculum consultation, and continuing education.

B. Counseling (group/individual), parent education, conferences, and consultation.

C. Career exploration, referral, training, and continuing education.

D. Counseling (group/individual), career guidance, mentoring, peer activities, and crisis intervention.